

The Tasing of Mary Lutz

Edmonton Street News spoke with Mary Lutz in Saskatchewan where she is still under house arrest. She and her fiancé are still outraged at the way she was treated by the RCMP, and the circumstances leading to her arrest. Mary was arrested at the home of her biological mother in Red Deer when she went there with a knife and a BB gun with the intent of committing suicide. It happened after her kids were taken by child welfare services following complaints by her own mother. Her mother has since been cut off from even speaking with child welfare for making false complaints.

Mary told ESN, "I was very emotional. I lost everything. The landlord threw everything out. I was in foster care when I was young. I was sexually molested and beaten by my dad. I was committed to a sanatorium and molested there every night. I was trying to get help with my five kids. They were being abused. My daughter had run away and my son was taken for three days by a pedophile. Nathan, my son started carrying a knife because the cops beat him up so bad - They kicked my door in and threatened to beat up my 13-year-old son.

"I snapped. I got into a cab and took my son's knife and a BB gun and went to the home of my biological mother, only I can't call her mother after what she did to me. She's totally respectable in her community, but she sexually molested my brother, and he became sexually abusive with me.

"When I was a child she would hold me down, sit on me, lock me up, pull my hair - I was going to kill myself in front of her because without my kids I have nothing. I had called child welfare from her house, and she called 911.

"When the police came I had no weapon in my hand. The BB gun didn't even work, and I had dropped the knife - the knife blade was bent from me banging against the chair, but the police officer

were removed. At one point the police placed her under arrest, and because of her past abuse, she can not bear to be restrained. In the back of the car, she ripped the handcuffs off, broke the window out with her head and jumped out of the moving cruiser, breaking several ribs. Once at the cop shop they threw her into the interrogation room where she begged them not to close the door, (her biological hole would lock her in a closet or under the stairs for hours). When they closed the door she flashed back to her earlier abuse, took a run at the one-way glass and knocked the whole window out with her head, this with several broken ribs.

"We are still fighting with child welfare, but the cops and child welfare work hand in hand. We currently have lawyer Robert Lee putting together a Law suite against child welfare. I am only touching the surface, hoping that with help maybe the abusive authorities can be exposed.

"Mary is so very positive. All she wants is her kids back and to have the child welfare system changed, so what has happened to her no other child or adult will have to endure.

"Oh ya her 17-year-old son is now with us. We have pictures of bruising around his neck from when the cops kicked the shit out of him for running away from an abusive foster home and made him return to that home. Mary complained in writing and got that Red Deer cop reprimanded. He is one of the cops who later came after Mary, resulting in the Tazering."

Tasers are not like cattle prods - they carry 40,000 volts, enough of a shock to burn the skin, leaving a red mark, which gradually fades, to a round white scar. Mary Lutz still has these permanent reminders from her encounter with the RCMP.

By Linda Dumont



straightened out the blade.

"I blacked out and freaked out. The cops were aware that I was unstable. I had no weapons. I had my hands up. One cop said, 'Shoot her.' He got me twice in the arm (with the taser). I was already down. It was unbelievable. I was freaking out. My body was jerking and shaking and they kept shooting me as I went down. They also roughed me up."

Mary was three months pregnant with twins at the time. She was tasered at least five times. She said the police all had different stories.

Mary's fiancée has been very supportive of her. He said, "Mary has had a lot happen to her. Since she was an infant her biological hole (Mother) - she will not refer to Anne Harvey as her Mother, severely abused her, Mary was in and out of foster homes where more abuse occurred; she was repeatedly raped; and in and out of group homes, then child welfare would put her back in her mother's care. Twice her mother beat her so badly she had to be resuscitated by paramedics.

Mary left home when she was 15. Once she started having children, her biological hole would make false allegations to child welfare to the point where her children

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Notes From a Prairie Silence - creative non-fiction

by local author, **Natasha Laurence**, is available in limited quantities, at the Red Strap Art Market, 10305 - 97 St., from Edmonton Street News at 428-0805 or edmontonstreetnews@shaw.ca, or directly from the author at: natashalaurence@yahoo.ca

The book contains actual testimony from the hearing investigating the taser of Randy Fryingpan: "If you get tasered by this thing it feels more like getting hit with some baseball bats from all directions, or like having a horse inside you trying to kick its way out. It's really jolting. It just feels like your muscles are contracting like really - like it feels like heavy thumping but inside your body" constable Mike Washlyshen, testifying at the trial of Randy Fryingpan

More fun with Ralph and Shirley (with a tip of the hat to Jane)

By Allan Sheppard

Yikes! That was fast!

If you are a regular ESN reader, you will recall that my last contribution to the Street News called on Premier Klein and Finance Minister McClellan to scrap rumoured plans to offer tax cuts as a way of sharing some of Alberta's oil revenue surplus. I suggested, instead, that Ralph and Shirley come up with a way to share the wealth with all residents, including children and others whose incomes are not high enough to have to pay taxes. I also called on readers who agreed with me to let our esteemed Premier and inestimable Minister know what they think and want.

Who would have thought Santa Claus or the tooth fairy would actually come? Yet no sooner had ESN hit the streets than our Premier stepped forward and did the right thing.

I have a lot of sympathy with suggestions from many quarters that the money should be spent on programs, including more truly affordable housing for the poor (not to mention offsets for some of the truly exorbitant current and future environmental costs of oil sands production, which is the source of much of our surplus revenue).

But we have to take our victories, however small, where we find them. Ralph and Shirley are blessed with an embarrassment of riches and a persistent inclination to help those who can help themselves, more than those who cannot. The current proposal at least has the virtue of helping those who truly need the money, even as it helps those who don't really need it. We must give thanks for small mercies; they are better than no mercy at all. And what does this have to do with housing, the nominal theme of my periodic contributions to the Street

News? Not much, to be honest. But if you will let me push the envelope a bit, I would like to suggest that you use a bit more than 5 per cent of your found money to buy a book that will tell you more about the real world of housing in Alberta and Canada (and many other things, as well), than I can ever hope to tell you—and it will do so in language that is simple, clear, direct and blessedly free of economic and academic jargon: *Dark Age Ahead*, written by Jane Jacobs, published by Vintage Canada, with a cover price of \$21.95.

Jacobs believes we in North America are on the verge, if not already part way into, a downward economic and social spiral that has the potential to throw us into a deep depression that could plumb greater depths in a race to the bottom than the Great Depression of the 1930s. She identifies six signposts pointing to potential disaster. One of them—the slow but steady decline in the ability of families to stay together and cope with changes seemingly beyond their control—reveals itself, among other ways, in the inability of families to buy or rent adequate housing:

"For almost forty years, starting in the mid- and late 1930s, the median income of an American and Canadian family was sufficient to cover the mortgage costs of a median-priced house or the rent of a median-priced apartment. 'Median' means, statistically, that half of whatever is being measured falls below the median, and half above. But at some point in the 1970s, the two figures—median shelter costs and median income—slipped seriously out of whack. The disconnection showed up clearly in the Canadian census of 1981. At about the same time, U.S. economic statistics showed that the purchase of a "median" house required an income that only 10 percent of families could claim. Ninety per cent could no longer

afford to buy a 'median' house."

The Michael Walkers among us (Walker is the director of the Vancouver-based ultra-conservative "think tank," the Fraser Institute) believe this is a good thing because 1) as the price of housing rises, the net worth of anyone who already owns a house rises with it, and 2) according to economic fundamentalist dogma, the ever-responsive market will inevitably respond to drops in median income by reducing the median price of housing.

"If that means anything," Jacobs comments dryly, "it must mean that the inflated wealth of those who already own houses cancels the plight of families priced out of the market."

As for Walker's blind, ideological faith that the market will take care of those who need, as well as those who have, take a look around and see where the market is, in fact, putting its investment some 20 years after Jacobs first raised the issue and Walker offered his "let-them-eat-cake" response: it is building high-end housing for those who want to convert the inflated equity in their homes into greater luxury. It is not building low-cost housing.

There are legislative and regulatory obstacles, as well as market distortions, that keep low-cost housing out of the market. But where is the pressure from the housing industry to cut through such obstacles? There is too much money to be made serving the top of the market for most builders to bother with the bottom.

I may return to Jacobs's book and ideas in a future column. But don't wait for me. Buy the book. Read it. Discuss it with your friends. Use it as a resource for inspiration and action.

And when you have finished with the book, you might consider passing a copy on to Ralph or Shirley. They listen too much to the Michael Walkers of the world.

Homefest 2005

November 13 - 4 to 8 p.m. at McDougall United Church, 10025-101 Street. A folk music celebration to end homelessness

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Earth's General Store (10832-Whyte Ave.), Grant MacEwan College Bookstores, Myhre's Music, the Paint Spot, Second Cup at Stanley Milner Library, and Tix on the Square Children under 12 free

Students, seniors, low income - \$5 For more information : www.homefest.ca



Hugh MacDonald, MLA

Edmonton-Gold Bar

Edmonton Gold Bar Constituency Office

#102, 7024 -101 Avenue, NW

Edmonton, Alberta. T6A 0H7

Tel: 414-1015 Fax: 414-1017

e-mail: hugh.macdonald@assembly.ab.ca

website: www.liberalopposition.com



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Feed the Greed

In what must be the most obscene striptease seen in the wild west in a long time Finance Minister Shirley McClellan revealed the naked truth on October 11, after three weeks of peeks and flashes to get us all aroused. The gratuitous celebration of fiscal obesity that constitutes this province's \$400 handouts to everyone (except the bad guys in prison) is enough to make me barf. This is burlesque at its ugliest—gross exaggeration, mockery of what is good, the veils dropped to reveal roiling debauched flesh.

The stupidity of it is part of what causes my stomach to react like that. This government claims to operate in a businesslike and responsible way. How often have we heard them tell us we have to let the market do its work, we can't have political interference—yet a real look at its record shows it to be an impetuous spoiled child, doing whatever it feels like regardless of whether it makes any sort of business sense. What sort of good stewardship is it to blow more than a billion dollars with no plan, no careful assessment of whether this is the best way? To announce it without any idea how to do it (or what it will cost to do it) or explanation of what it has to do with any larger vision of the province we want to have?

But even more, it is what it says about the twisted values that are at the core of how this government operates that really twists my guts.

I joined a group of people for Thanksgiving supper recently, people who have come to Edmonton from several countries of the world where they experienced danger, torture and violence. As we shared favourite dishes from our cultures we talked about life here. Two men, one from east Africa and one from Central America, got talking about how many good things they have received from Canada. But they went on to talk about how strange they find the high respect we give to independence and self-reliance. "The only way to live well is to share in community," one of them told me. "Why do people here think it is a sign of success that you can get along without needing anyone else?" the other asked.

The decision to hand out the same amount of money to millions of people solely on the basis that they happen to live in Alberta on September 1 rein-



Will this man get \$400?

forces the idea that there is nothing more fundamental than the individual. It takes about three seconds for anyone with enough intelligence to say "Ralph Klein" to realize \$400 means a multitude of different things. Everyday I visit with people who live all month on that much money, have to meet all their needs with it. Then I walk through a mall and see other people spending that much for a toy to play video games, for a pair of shoes, or for medical care for their cat.

I give people \$2 for a bus ticket so they will not have to walk from downtown to Beverly and then see a billboard advertising cars that start as low as \$61,000. I overhear a conversation about a bottle of \$100 whiskey consumed by a few people at a party, and then say hello to a fellow on the street who has been up since well before dawn collecting cans from dumpsters to get \$4.95 for a bottle of Colt 45.

I'm sure you get the point. Why are we chopping the pie into three million identical pieces when there are many with no need at all and others with desperate live-and-death needs? Because we want everyone to keep thinking life is all about me, not us.

So that's part of what makes me sick, that this giveaway reinforces an already dangerous concept that we don't have any particular responsibility to each other—not to say some charity, some condescending sharing of our excess, is not acceptable. But responsibility? No way.

It also says something about a contempt for those same individuals who are being encouraged to just think of themselves. This goofy rebate plan

insults poor people because it puts them in the mean situation of needing the money desperately to make ends meet so it is nearly impossible to turn it down even if they believe it is a bad way to use public resources, even if they need and deserve much more, need well-designed stable programs and services that will assist them over the long term to improve the quality of their lives. And it insults those who do not need it by smiling cynically at them and saying "So, if you don't like what we are doing, be a goody-goody and donate yours to charity," a dare that implies "We know most of you who make all sorts of righteous pronouncements will end up shrugging your shoulders and taking and spending the money just like the rest of us."

Their satisfaction will be that most of us will take the money and use it for ourselves. If we do it without any guilty conscience, they'll be pleased to know the numbers of those who have lost any sense of a moral obligation to the greatest good of all are growing. If we do it with a guilty conscience, they'll be pleased to know we are just as flawed as they are, with no moral higher ground left, able to be bought as long as the payoff is enough. They talk self-reliance but they manipulate by cultivating greed.

Another value this action reveals is the paternalistic arrogance of these guys. They act like it's their money and if they want to give it away they can. They have lost—or rejected—any sense they are representing all of us, that the fiscal resources they oversee belong to all of us and that the idea of democracy is that there is an obligation for all the voices to be heard as deci-

sions are made. Oh no, for these guys, it's all about doing whatever they feel like. They remind me of the old myths about the gods on Mount Olympus lounging on their couches, looking down to Earth and arbitrarily interfering here or there because it amused them. "Let's cut welfare rates below where anyone can possibly have a life" they might decide one year. "Let's give everyone a bit of money and watch them scramble frantically about trying to act cool about it" they might decide another year. But whether to kick us in the teeth or drop a few coins in the dirt for us to grovel for, it's all the same. They get to run the show and we're just supposed to say "Thank you sir" when they go by.

This government wants our votes, but they don't honour our dignity as individuals any more than they respect the importance of community. With this rebate farce they have quit mouthing slick fictions where the rhetoric sounds good even if the reality that results seems sick and are saying outright "The emperor has no clothes, but we could care less even if you think the naked reality is disgusting, because we're still the emperor and you'll take what we give you—or else."

I smell the smirk over this perverse farce of leadership emanating from the Legislature into every home in Alberta like a smelly fart. It makes me want to barf.

And that might be enough, get the anger out of my guts. But I don't think it is, quite. There's a poet by the name of William Stafford who has challenged and encouraged me many times over the years. He writes "... as elephants parade holding each elephant's tail,/ but if one wanders the circus won't find the park,/ I call it cruel and maybe the root of all cruelty/ to know what occurs but not recognize the fact./ And so I appeal/ ... though we could fool each other, we should consider—/ lest the parade of our mutual life get lost in the dark." Could enough of us find the tough muscle that is the heart of real justice and tell these guys to stop fooling around, to behave like adults? Wouldn't that be something?

By Jim Gurnett

Riches to Rags

In regard to the \$400 surplus dollars that Albertans are to receive, first, Alberta suffers a high rate of poverty. \$400 going to every Albertan does absolutely nothing for those living on the threshold of homelessness, where single mothers with children whose social services cheques barely pay for necessities in maintaining a lifestyle. It is without a doubt this may be one of the main reasons why so many of Alberta's children fall into the realms of prostitution, addictions, drug trafficking and the gang

lifestyle. On behalf of 1,000's of Albertans I would ask that our elected officials reconsider how we spend Alberta's new found wealth. It is unfortunate and an embarrassment to Alberta's heritage that the policies of Alberta have done nothing but establish a subculture of the working poor, the prison system, and the growing number of those becoming homeless. Alberta's history has taught us that with poverty Alberta will always have a high rate of crime and death. Like many other Albertans this money would be better off going back into our depleted education and stricken

health care systems. Also this money could be used in the immediate review of the changes made under Alberta's mental health act. This money could also be used in the improvement of assessability to low cost, affordable housing or the provincial government could sit down with the federal justice system and renegotiate the civil rights of those who cannot defend or speak up for themselves, in changing some laws where people can improve the quality of their lives and live longer. The vision of Alberta could also lie in the accountability of how this large sum of money is spent.

By Dale Ferris

Prayer for one in prison

By Roche

When you're alone in your cell
And you feel like you're going
thru' hell,

Just be sure you remember this
well:

I will pray for you my dear child
That I let my spirit run free and
wild

Surely making it's way to you
So you can feel that my love for
you is true.

India Journal: Return

When I first went to India, I did not know how I was going to get back there again. The fact that I was going to go back was just a given. I didn't want to leave the first time, coming back plunged me into a period of such intense and inconsolable grief I could barely stand it. As fortune would have it, I came into a little more money this spring, a year and a half after my return, so the first thing I did was to buy myself a plane ticket back. I have begun my journey overseas with a 14 day stop over on the coast to visit my daughter who has just moved to North Van and two of my brothers and a sister in law who live on the Island.



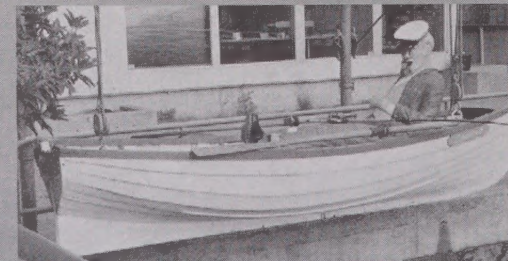
Every now and then a gust of wind carries on it the distinctive tang of seashore. This more than the gray green shapes of the coastal range hulking on the eastern horizon remind me that I am not in Alberta any more.

My daughter lives in North Vancouver now. She has embarked on her own adventure, setting up her nutrition counseling business. I have arrived on the coast in time to take delivery in her new apartment of the household goods I supervised loading onto a truck in Edmonton last week.



Lonsdale Avenue is her new main street. Lonsdale plunges down the north shore slope to the eastern terminus of the sea bus across to "The City".

There is a lot of development going on at this terminal, large signs proclaim that for the first time in a hundred years this sea shore will be assessable to people again.





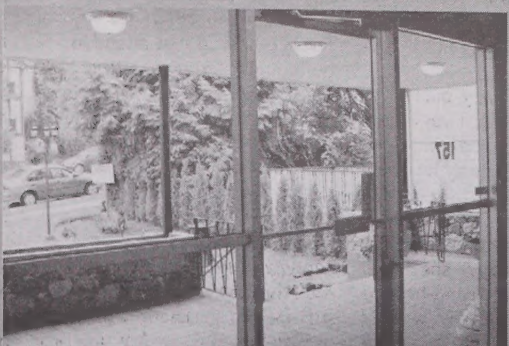
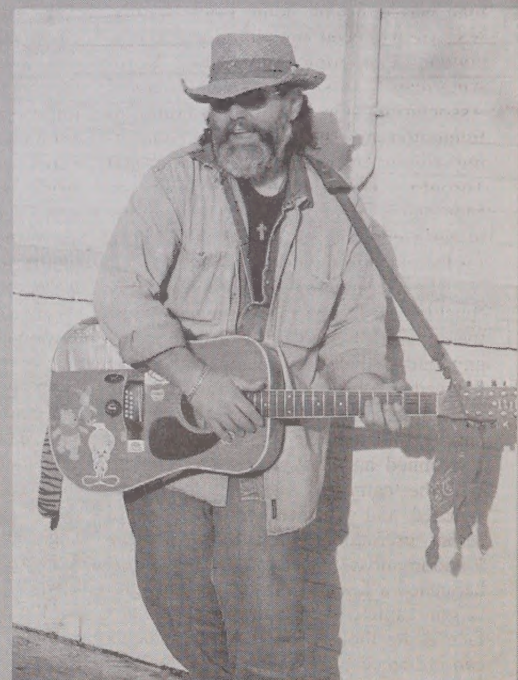
Lonsdale has definitely cleaned up it's act since I saw it last. Back in the late seventies it was an in-your-face blue collar area, with biker bars, pawnshops, laundromats and restaurants which fried everything. We used to drive over to do the laundry because there was no such thing as a laundromat in the upper class Marine Drive area where we rented.



Now Lonsdale has take out sushi bars, wall to wall coffee shops with sidewalk seating and Iranian produce and flower stands. There is a a shop called Boomers and Echo which appears to be doing a thriving business in previously owned, very elaborate baby strollers and Baby Gap clothing.



This makes think of all the care and effort Karen, the others at Rat Creek and Pieter and CAP put into promoting a vision of 118th Avenue as an attractive, prosperous and people safe place. Lonsdale shows that can happen if the impulse is followed up on. The building stock along the Avenue itself is not that great, it's been around for a while, but it's been renovated and maintained. The street is a main drag and there is a lot of traffic, that hasn't changed. The trees haven't had much time to grow yet. However there is lots of foot traffic and lots of interesting stuff you can walk to see, and lots of places to stop and rest as well, so that makes it an interesting and vibrant area.



So, the blue collar thing is still there. There are still laundromats, lots of loonie stores, a shoemakers for me to get my cowboy boots resoled, an honest to God hardware store and a little bit of cool import stuff in between the sushi joints, the yoga studios, the snow/street boarder shops and the coffee shops. And of course, there is a smallish Superstore that's all yellow, but doesn't call itself Superstore and a London Drugs that's a clone of the one two blocks away from where I live in Edmonton. I checked out the Sally Ann down by the waterfront. Found a nice long Indian print skirt and a suitably lightweight blouse for those first days in Delhi. It all says "trendy on a budget" to me. I think it's pretty neat. It's got all the services of a 2000 era small town within easy walking distance.

And of course there is that almost reflexive long season urge to landscape everything, so even the walk up apartments that flank each side of the avenue have lovely flowering shrubs and flagstone walkways. Rainbow loves her neighbourhood and her new apartment, (hardwood floors throughout), small but choice.

Rainbow's cat is ecstatic. Her number of hiding places increased

by a factor of ten when the movers brought in Rainbow's stuff, and it all smells right. She has spent the last couple of hours in an orgy of rubbing up against everything. Poor baby has spent the last couple of days cowering under a sweltering sleeping bag while the painter and cleaner were finishing up last minute chores. Six years as an illegal alien in apartment land will do it to a beast.

I really enjoy the smell of the sea mingling with the scent of late blooming flowers. Reminds me I'm not in Alberta anymore. Tomorrow I have to get on that sea bus and get over to the Indian Consulate and get my visa.



July, 2005, a 56 year old Aboriginal man was returning home from Halifax, NS. He had been attending the 2005 bi-annual Conference of the North American Street Newspapers Association. On the flight home to Edmonton, AB., he had to make connecting flights at Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto. The connecting flight at Montreal went smoothly and he had time to eat a quick snack before checking in for the plane to Ottawa.

The passengers were all comfortably 'buckled' in to taxi to the runway, when the captain of Air Canada's flight #613 announced that their plane was being delayed and that all were to unbuckle and remain seated. At the time, the captain simply said that the luggage was being re-scanned and they weren't concerned with the 'carry-on' bags. People became agitated and whispers could be heard about international situations, like the London railway bombings that had just happened a few days prior to this flight. A grin came over the quiet Aboriginal's face as he thought how some incidents can influence such unreasonable precautions. "After all," he thought to himself, "the chances of getting killed on the ride to the airport were far greater than the chances of being killed on the airplane flight all the way to Edmonton or wherever."

The quiet Aboriginal man was trying his best to avoid talking with a rather aggressive lady beside him. He found his present, persistent and pesky companion to be a bit annoying to his sensitive hearing. Once or twice, she threw in the 'f' word to show emphasis on her achievements and good behavior since her divorce. More than once the Aboriginal heard her backtrack on some minutiae of her story, which she thought was being swallowed by him. It was the man's encultured nature to show politeness and courtesy so he allowed the lady to chatter and pretend he was listening. The lady swallowed his 'pretend listening' and verbally began to unveil her pretentiousness. He forgot where or when he had tuned her out, but he tuned in to the captain's announcement that all passengers were to leave the plane with their 'carry on' luggage, and to stay around the departure gate. The captain had previously apologized on behalf of Air Canada and explained that being in the "capital city" area, this sort of delay was not unusual.

At the departure gate area the woman began to alienate most people with her superior attitude and 'unlady-like' behavior and language. It was at this point that she began to use language that reminded the Aboriginal man of what a 'red-neck' lady might be.

"I think this 'bush league' arrowlines has tried ma' patience up to the yin yin today, and canuck Eskimoo heads are gonna roll when I tell mah' old man about this," she bellowed for all to hear.

"Is your old man, eh, ah defined as father or husband?" the Aboriginal man asked with a smile on his face, trying to lighten the tension he felt in the air.

"Who the f%&*@ are you to ask me that, you bush nigger? I thought you was a handsome eyetalian before in the plane, but in here you look like a rotten Injian." She stated this without batting a phony eye lash and some people were a little embarrassed by her loud statement.

"Excuse mam, but I believe you owe this gentleman an apology," said a rather attractive, tall lady with a heavy accent he almost recognized. "In my country, we

have clubs to honour this man's ancestral ways, such the pow-wow clubs, pipe ceremonies, and very interested in their spiritual and herbal medicinal contributions they've made to the world." This really impressed the Aboriginal, but he didn't get a chance to thank his defender as the American passenger was getting into her stride of more anger precipitated now by a new target.

"And I suppose you krauts think you gonna fool us U.S. of A. citizens, that we're stoopid enough to think you're not trying to take over our economy like the Jewish cheats did with yours. No wonder you're tryin' to unite. Even these moron, bush niggers are trying to unite and steal our land that was paid for by my taxes."

The American lady seemed to have little compunction about insulting anyone when angry or frustrated over plane delays in Ottawa. It was obvious that the flight attendants were getting a bit more nervous about the lady's progress towards hysterics. It seemed a good time for the Aboriginal man to step in with his

sense of humour as a way to diffuse a sensitive situation. Without further thought to those already injured by the 'lady's' verbosity so far, he waded in with an irrelevant joke without cracking a smile.

"Well, gentlemen and some ladies," he said, "today is good to be stuck in our Canadian capital's airport, see some international aircraft land or take-off; and, as the ambassador of some iceburg and its populace on Jame's Bay, I'd say one can aspire to the prime ministerial job there when I get home." Some people smiled. The woman carried on with the sudden ringing of her cell; "And it's about time you called, honey. Say munchkins, am stuck in this canuck place they call their capital city and its all over hell's half acre no-one's heard of, so eay'll be late for the connecting flight at Michigan and, therefore; eye think your firm should shoot'em down with a suit, you know what eye meen? That should lower the high and no-mighty captain of their arrowline and not delay nice people like me." With that, she listened for a bit and carried on her end of the cell conversation. "Well, okay, munchkins, eye'll see you all in no time; this plane will move or eye'll find out why!" With that she haughtily closed her cell started towards a stewardess and one could almost feel for the staff.

"Mah' lawyer boyfriend wants to know the name of your supervisor, and all staff responsible for my delay and, furthermore he ..." she did not get a chance to complete her last statement as her cell phone rang again. She curtsied to her new non-friend to answer her call, and said before speaking into it, "See how fast results come mah way, boy, when things are done proper-like?"

The tall attractive lady's male companion made a comical comment before she spoke into her cell, "Lady, if the call's for me, I'm not in unless it's from the president of whatever country you came from." Scattered sounds of muted laughter, disguised as muffled coughs could be

heard among the younger crowd and out right giggles among the older ones.

"Mind yore manners bean-pole, there's a lady talking here," the American woman half yelled at the man who, for some reason, had come to stand beside the Aboriginal man. His friend, the tall attractive one was smiling at the Aboriginal man and about to say something when she was interrupted by an announcement over the intercom.

"Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of Air Canada; we apologize for this delay. Our departure time has now been changed indefinitely, and everyone's new flight will be assigned to the appropriate plane and time to get you home as fast as we can arrange it. Because of recent events that have occurred in other parts of the world, our airlines across the nation have followed cautionary steps to ensure everyone's safety. You will be given a different gate pass to another plane and your luggage will be re-scanned before being put on the aircraft. About forty other planes have been

A RACIAL INCIDENT

affected by this incident, but things will be resolved shortly and shouldn't effect travel plans anymore from here on end."

"Well, that ain't getting me home any faster," the American lady said angrily. "...and eye have some things to finish to stop this from happening to other Americans." The tall attractive lady and companion stood beside the quiet Aboriginal and wanted to talk to him when the American woman came over and asked for their names as "witnesses" to her "Distress and emotional state" as a result of the lateness of the plane and putting up with a fearsome Injian that hardly spoke and fooled people into thinking he was an 'eyetalian.' The other lady stepped in and softly stated that she still thought the American lady's behaviour warranted an apology to the native man and also to her for calling her 'kraut.' "In my country your remarks can be construed as racial slurs," the tall lady simply said.

At that last softly spoken statement, most people within hearing distance could cut through an already tense situation.

"I beg you pardon, but truth is truth, and he is an Injian and you are a 'kraut' - German ain't ya'?" the American lady seemed satisfied that the matter can be dropped. One man spoke on behalf of his friends by saying, "For us we feel that we all make mistakes with no harm intended, and we believe in letting by-gones be by-gones."

"The statement this lady made was obviously racist and we discourage such nonsense in my courtroom," a pinstriped suited man stated, walking away he threw a chilled look at the American and a grin with a wink at the Aboriginal fellow.

"Well, some people have the nerve to speak out of turn, don't they?" she asked.

"What you said was wrong-headed and not representative about how we feel towards our land's original residents," a non-descript man said from somewhere in the mass of people listening in a non participating way.

"This is not racist on mah part, and our constitution has no room for it," the American lady thought this would appease the folk that seemed to go against her.

"Yeah, and your dogs don't bark and my crap doesn't stink!" stated an impatient and angry lady from the crowd.

"You know people, one of my former national leaders just shamed the crap out of most natives by making racial slurs," said the quiet Aboriginal man. "In fact, I used to be a high school teacher for plus twenty years and worked on a lot of reserves, where I've heard this native leader utter some of the most despicable, racial slurs that would make this lady look like a gentle school marm. What this lady said are merely words of description to a situation. There is no such thing as racism unless you go looking for it; in which case you'll find it by looking in the mirror." The Aboriginal man made the statement to get all of them thinking about a way they might look at themselves without looking to find faults in attitudes amongst other people. "We can be racist without our knowledge, and someone might see through us and we deny our weaknesses. Just like this native leader I spoke of, who has the audacity to keep his undeserved awards given for political reasons to the public post he held, and certainly not his leadership skills as most natives saw his drinking skills more than his good side; many had lost respect for the guy but he denied the situation till he was voted out."

"But your leader didn't kill as many people as any of our leaders," another man spoke up, "and I understand a lot of our natives refuse to move away from the squalor of reservation life as it is their only home left, in which they feel comfortable and safe."

"Had our leaders spent the money as appropriated for education and such, we'd have fewer useless petty politicians and more mouths would have been fed and perhaps more houses built on reserves." The Aboriginal man said suddenly refereeing a scene he disliked more than a domineering American lady that he knew how to ignore.

It was at this point that intervention of a high order came from the unlikely source of a very young, but intelligent youth. She said, looking towards the offending and offended American lady, "It's amazing isn't it, how simple it is to face the truth about ourselves and how frightening it must be for the idiots of this planet to know that no matter how the bad guys try, human harmony will eventually prevail because that is generally what works out in the end?"

Flights to Toronto were announced including the Aboriginal man's headed for Edmonton. He breathed a sigh of relief as a flash-back to the heady university days came and went which put a damper on an otherwise enjoyable conference he had just attended. To himself he thought, "You're getting soft intellectually when you let such nonsense go," but then after all, talking and debating with an airhead wasn't his style and she most certainly wasn't much for intellectual discussion. Somehow, as he was landing at Toronto, he felt that he had not completed his teaching career unless he kept harping away at his theme of "no such thing as racism"; but, for some there still is. His generation of teachers had obviously not done their job properly. He wondered if the next generation of educators would even tackle it.

By Ernie Ballandine

Letter to Gene Zwozdesky

The author of this letter to Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Education, likes to share his views with the honourable ladies and gentlemen of the Alberta Cabinet. Watch for further letters in future issues of ESN.

Dear Gene,
Watch out!

Things have been too quiet on your front lately Gene. I have a bad feeling there's a plan being hatched to try to shake a bunch of money out of you.

You know what teachers are like— heck, you passed through the trade yourself, but were obviously too bright and motivated to waste your life in such a dead end job. We all know the old proverb "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." You know the system's full of people who like the easy life, work 200 days a year— and darn short working days at that— and earn as much money as a cop out there putting his life on the line every hour.

With a powerful union to protect them so it's almost impossible to get rid of the deadwood— and there's plenty of that— and a fat pension being built up for them, they've got it made. Sitting at the front of the class handing out assignments, and letting the kids do the work. Then off to the staff room to drink coffee and gossip and call it a "prep". Man, talk about a slack job.

But I can guarantee you they are plotting to go after a big chunk of new money now there's all the talk about Alberta having a surplus. They'll mount an attack that whines about having too many students in their classrooms with some phoney argument about how the poor little ones just can't get proper attention when 30 of them are crowded into one room. As if it's any harder to tell 30 people to turn to page 35 of the workbook and answer the questions than it is to tell 15 the same thing. The true translation of what they are saying is "I want to do even less work for my big salary."

The attack will probably want a bunch more money for all sorts of extras too— how can a kid get a decent education these days unless the schools are full of top of the line computers for everyone and the best of music instruments and sports equipment and so on. They'll want you to fund all sorts of special programs too—like individual tutoring for the little ones with ADD— "attention deficit disorder" got taken care of in my time with a good smack on the shoulder with the yard stick, not a lot of special testing by a psychologist.

The Tasing of Mary Lutz

From the website *Injusticebusters*

"The cops were in no danger from Mary Lutz when they tasered her. This is a clear case of sadistic punishment of a person they have pledged to serve and protect. The cops who did this were: Const. Doyle - D.J.R.R.D.C. Badge # 36447 Const. Nash R.J. - Badge # 470370, Const. Bates Lorne RRDC Badge # 50158 and Const. Kobeluck - Blaine RRDC Badge # 46573." They tasered her. This is a clear case of sadistic punishment of a person they have pledged to serve and protect.

Injusticebusters first became concerned about police irregular use of tasers when stories began emerging from the U.S. At that time, Saskatchewan police were recklessly using pepper spray (see *Vernon Crowe*) and dropping aboriginal men at the edge of town in freezing weather. (See *Darrell Night*)

On the other hand, there have been instances where use of a taser would have been more appropriate than the choice that was made: shooting the person. (*Keldon McMillan*, *Melvin Bigsky*.)

Injusticebusters carried a report of the tasing of *Randy Fryngpan*, a teenager who was sleeping in the back of a car when the cops unnecessarily and brutally shook him, tasered him and took him into custody. We received an account about another Alberta person — a single mother who had taken good care of her children — but had them apprehended because of a meddling mother. Just after the turn of the new year I received e-mail from a Saskatchewan man who recounted how his girlfriend in Alberta was under house arrest after some incidents where child protective services had removed her children from her on the basis of mischievous stories her own mother had told to child protection authorities.

This is another case of an improper investigation and police overstepping their authority. The story was written in such angry language it almost burnt my eyes to read it. While anger is justified, I did not want to present Mary's story that way. There was a postscript at the end of the e-mail that said that Mary had been tasered five times by Red Deer RCMP. Her complaints about her treatment led to her house arrest."

Yes Gene, I suspect the attack will come from every direction. The teachers will recruit parents and school boards and "student leaders". Some of them will cry about schools having to be closed when enrolments fall too low. They've never had to learn about the real world of the market. If your hardware store is in a neighbourhood where few people live anymore, you close or move, you don't expect a government program to come by and keep you in business. Some expert will be issuing terrible warnings about the future of the kids being ruined because they have to spend an extra 10 minutes on the school bus every morning.

The one thing those teachers do know about is marketing— and they pool enough from contributions from their fat salaries that when they decide to go after you for more money they'll be sure to have lots of fancy billboards and ads on prime time TV to propagandize the gullible.

I'm sure you are quite able to take these guys on and come out on top. You know your foe, having been on the inside a while. And you are about as slick as they come at sounding like a pep squad cheerleader but avoiding actually saying anything, leaving anyone who listens to you with a vague good feeling but none the wiser for anything. That equips you well to face the onslaught and slip out of it like a greased pig, without anyone managing to get a real grip on you.

Gene, I hope you know there are lots of us who will be backing you. We are sick and tired of thinking we have to pour endless dollars into a school system that pampers a bunch of spoiled kids and provides a big income to a bunch of teachers who could never hold a job in the real world.

We did just fine getting ready for the adult world in classrooms where you got one ink nib a week and had to look after it, not where you had a scientific calculator; where you got a recess detention if your fingernails didn't pass cleanliness inspection, not where there were offices full of counsellors asking if there was anything troubling you that you need to "share"; where you got an A because you knew how to spell, not because of your creative energy. Heck Gene, I bet there'd be a lot of support if you went beyond just holding the line and started to demand the school system learn how to operate in a competitive world where you showed results or hit the road.

Yours for a return to the 3 Rs,

Ted White



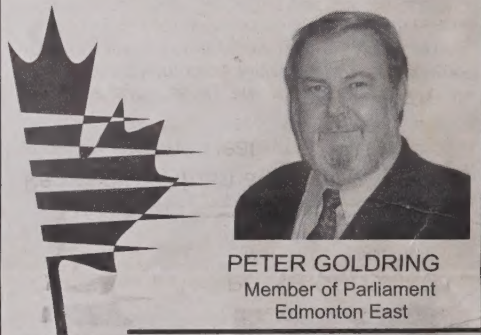
Mary's son's neck after his encounter with the police. — see back cover

Faith: A Cry in the Dark

By Linda Dumont

This poem has been selected for publication in the anthology of poetry *The Best Poets of 2005* at Poetry.com

In the dark days I raised tear-blinded eyes
to leaden skies
And cringed beneath the acid wash of pain.
In my desolation and loneliness, abandoned and
hopeless,
I turned a stark blank face to an unreachable
heaven
And faith was just a whimper to an unseen god
But it made all the difference.
As the silvery moon-drops of my tears
Traced gleaming trails across my face,
My ice-locked heart warmed from within
And slowly melted,
Because somehow, in the midst of wintry darkness
When there was no one else to turn to
God answered my cry.
Nothing had changed, but it made all the difference.



PETER GOLDRING
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East

Remove GST from a Necessity of Life-Home Heating Fuels

Once again as we are approaching the "challenges" of an Edmonton winter. This year in particular, with instability in global prices, we can expect an even more expensive winter, in terms of trying to keep warm. While Canadians pay tax on tax and GST on top, Californians get Canadian gas GST free.

As oil and gas prices increase, total GST payable also increases and the GST for Canadians only is another "tax on a tax". Once again, the federal government is attempting to address high heating costs through heating rebates paid to those considered by them to be most in need. However, these rebates are not given every year, and it's not only the abjectly poor who get squeezed by high heating costs, topped with GST. Nobody really has a choice when it comes to paying for heat in the winter. Home heating fuels are one of the basic necessities of life, and should therefore be GST exempt.

I have taken action and presented motions on this issue in the House of Commons on three occasions - the most recent in September, 2005. The motions reads as follows: "That, in the opinion of the House, the Goods and Services Tax should not be applied to the sale of home heating fuels." The motion has not yet come up for debate.

The Federal government is not averse to periodically rebating the GST to further a particular political agenda. If the federal government can rebate the GST for some purposes, surely they can provide permanent GST relief for all taxpayers for a necessity of life - home heating fuel. For a change, let's see some federal sensitivity for the tax burden of the individual taxpayer. What do you think?

495-3261 www.petergoldring.ca